

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

REPORT

INFORMATION REPORT

COUNTRY USSR (Estonia)
SUBJECT Aegne Saar (Aegne Island)

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Location and Topography

- The island of Aegne (Aegne Saar) is located in the Gulf of Finland directly north of Tallinn [59°35'N and 24°45'E] and measures about two kilometers from northwest to southeast and three kilometers from northeast to southwest.

The island was flat and heavily wooded, with the exception of a narrow spit of cleared land at the northeast tip which was sandy and rocky and where military maneuvers and target practice were held. The island sloped gradually to the water's edge and one could walk to the shore at any point. The best sand beach was on the northwest side, the balance of the shoreline being rather rocky. The surf was usually gentle and tides were not high.

Population

- Only officers and non-commissioned officers were permitted to have their families with them. There were perhaps 20 officers, 60 non-commissioned officers and 250 to 300 enlisted men. There were no civilians on the island with the exception of three stenographers, a teacher and a woman hairdresser.

Housing

- Most of the buildings were wooden, although in 1940 construction of concrete block houses was begun on the east side of the island. These were very modern, complete with running water and electricity.

Transportation

- There was a small gauge railroad which ran from the harbor on the south side of the island along the west coast to the north side. There was one

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locomotive, one passenger car and one or two flatcars for carrying supplies and luggage. The train had no regular schedule except that it always met the supply boat which came four times a week from Tallinn. There were no automobiles on the island and there were only three horses used on the farm. Narrow sandy roads connected various parts of the island.

Climate

5. The weather was extremely cold and damp, averaging about 20°F below freezing in winter and 70°F in summer. The prevailing wind was from the north and it blew almost constantly. [redacted] there were only two winters when the gulf between the island and Tallinn was completely frozen over and I recall it was then necessary to ride horseback or walk across the ice to the mainland. The extremely cold weather usually started about the middle of January and often lasted until early May. During the spring and fall there was quite a bit of rain and many cloudy days. During the summer it was usually warm and sunny. In the fall there was a great deal of fog. 50X1

Wildlife

6. Wildlife on the island consisted of water birds, squirrels and deer. [redacted] 50X1
[redacted] the President of Estonia presented the island with a gift of two deer. [redacted] the deer 50X1
population was extremely large and it was illegal to kill them with the following exception: It was not uncommon for a doe to have three fawns in the spring, one of which she would abandon. It was the custom for the soldiers to round up all the deserted fawns and care for them until they were of sufficient size for killing and eating.

Military Installations

7. There were three coastal artillery batteries on the north side of the island as well as an antiaircraft battery on the east side of the island. Defense installations existed during World War I and when the Russians retreated in 1917 or 1918 all the guns were destroyed. In 1919, during the war for independence, rebuilding of the installations was begun and by 1935 they were in excellent condition and fully manned. Battery Number I /See Enclosure (A) for location of batteries/ was the largest and had four 12" guns, all turreted and all mounted on concrete platforms. It had its own power station, which in an emergency could supply the entire island with electricity. Ammunition was stored in an underground dump. Batteries Number II and III were smaller, each having four 6" guns. The anti-aircraft Battery, Number IV, had three guns but I do not recall their size or any other details about them.

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ENCLOSURE (A): Sketch Map Showing Principal Landmarks in Aegne Saar

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621.51	25M
138.2	25M
755.211	25M
623.442	25M
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621.4	25M

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ENCLOSURE (A)

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Legend:

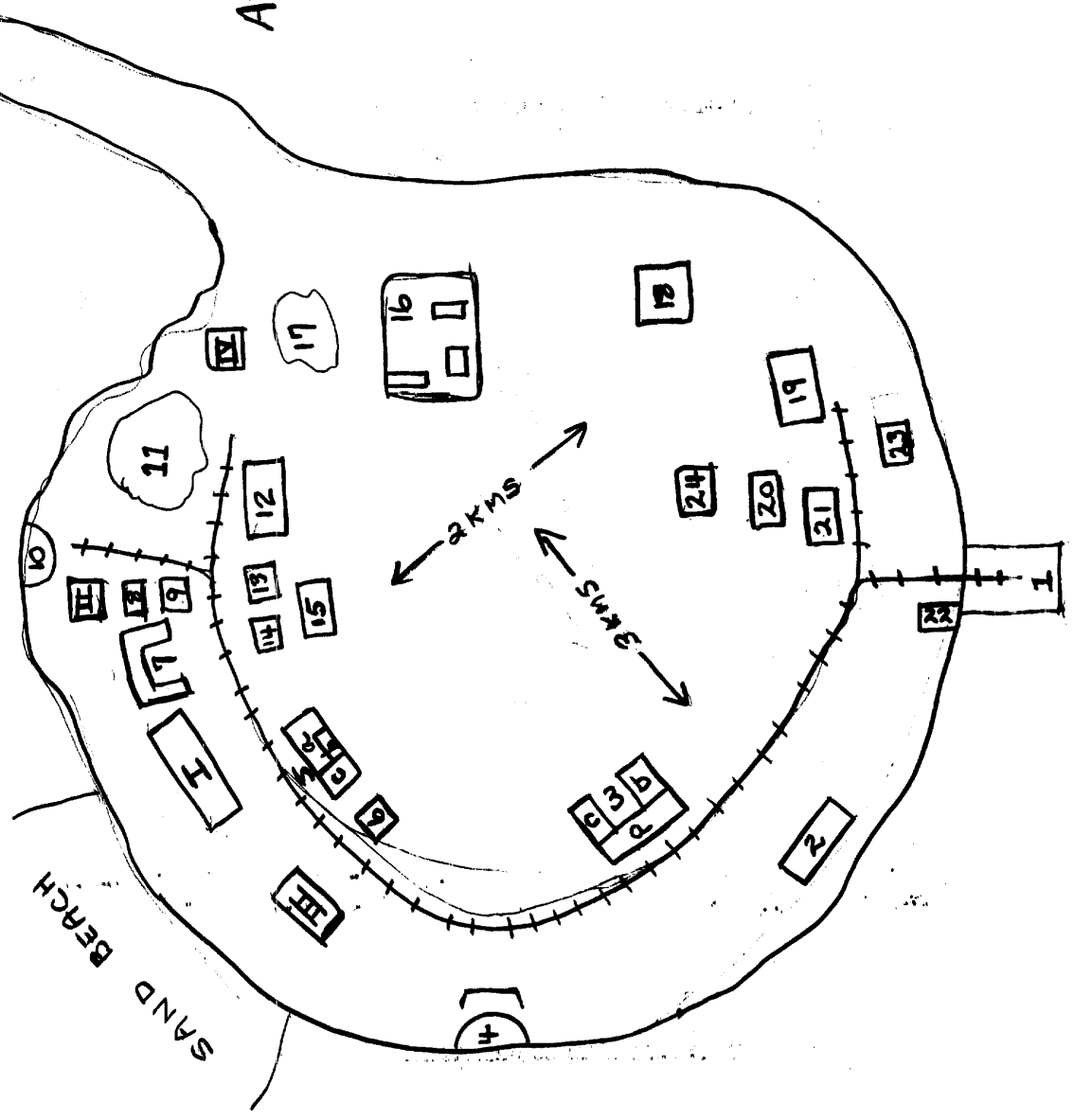
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- . A small pier where naval craft and the supply boat, which came four times a week from the mainland, docked. I do not know the depth of the harbor, but it must have been quite deep as the largest ice breaker in the Baltic was able to come in to the pier.
- . Private home of the Commanding Officer of the island. [redacted] a Major Kivimaa, an artillery officer, was in command and resided here with his family. He was replaced [redacted] by a Captain Poder, who was a single man. This house had four large rooms, a kitchen and bath. It had electricity, running water and heat was provided by a wood-burning stove.
- . (a) Officers' Club, containing dining hall and recreation facilities.
(b) Office of the Commanding Officer. There was also a room used as a Post Office.
(c) A one-story wooden building containing seven or eight rooms where the unmarried officers were housed.
- . A large search light was situated here. It was mounted on wheels and could be put into a small shed immediately behind it when not in use. There was a large concrete platform on which the search light rested when in use.
- . (a) Club house for non-commissioned officers.
(b) Barber shop and beauty parlor.
(c) A six grade school. One teacher was in charge of the 15 or 20 pupils who attended.
- . Officer's private home.
- . Living quarters for the enlisted men, complete with dining hall and kitchen.
- . Laundry. This was the only brick building on the island.
- . Gymnasium, dining and recreation hall where movies were shown, plays produced and where parties and dances were held.
- . I believe there was another search light situated here, but I am not sure.
- . A former fishing village with some 15 to 20 houses where the non-commissioned officers lived with their families. They were one-story single houses for the most part, although some were large enough to house two families.
- . Power station. This was a two-story building and the second floor provided living quarters for an officer and his family. This power station provided electricity for the entire island, including Battery Number I in the event its own power plant failed.
- . Store
- . Food supply house
- . Two-story living house with four living quarters for non-commissioned officers.
- . Small farm cared for by soldiers. It had four or five cows, a few pigs and three horses. It supplied milk and meat for the military.
- . A small cemetery belonging to the former fishing village.
- . A private home for officers built just a year before the Russians came in. It was very modern, made of concrete block, two stories high, with a basement. It had living quarters for four families, each consisting of four rooms with kitchen and bath.
- . Another four-family, two-story, wooden house for officers. This house had an excellent view across the bay to Tallinn. It could also be seen from Tallinn and was known as the "mountain top castle".
- . Living quarters for officers, a one-story building.
- . First aid station and small infirmary with perhaps two or three beds.
- . Harbor guard house.
- . A former power station which was being used as living quarters.
- . Two-story wooden house for married officers.

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AEGNE SAAR



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